

Wilmot-48

Library of Congress
Washington D. C.
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Dear Miss Tarbell;

For six months past I have been working, with Mrs. Going's help, on a biography of David Wilmot, of Previso fame. A great and (at the outset) unforeseen difficulty has appeared, in the fact that all Wilmot's papers have disappeared. His wife, who survived him many years, died completely deranged; and all his correspondence from the leaders in the Free Soil movement vanished, either before her death or in an irresponsible administration of her affairs.

Mrs. Going, who is a niece of D. W., says that her mother, Wilmot's half sister, often spoke of a letter to Wilmot from Lincoln tendering a place in the Cabinet. Mrs. Overton had seen it; but when she tried to get it for transmission to Nicolay and Hay, it could not be found. I have been searching for the other end of the correspondence-- there must have been many letters from Wilmot to Lincoln; but so far the results are nil, whether from printed pages or private collections. The nearest I have come to confirmation is a letter from the Springfield correspondent of the N Y Herald, dated early in January, 1861, describing a visit of David's to Springfield and an all-day conference with Lincoln-- it was confidently assumed, for the purpose of discussing his assumption of one of the Cabinet positions. The family tradition is that he declined on account of failing health.

Now: did you ever come across any trace of such a story, in any of your researches among Lincoln manuscripts or data, or indeed, did you come across anything throwing even a general light upon the relations between the two men? And if so, would you give me a hint for further guidance? I know your kindness too well to apologize further for asking this.

Yi would have a message for you if she knew I was writing. I have left her at home today to catch up on domestic chores, while I ran down for a quiet afternoon at this desk in the Manuscript Division, to start this outside search for the missing chapter.

Sincerely yours

Charles Going